

# Interregional and EU–ASEAN Relations

## Achievements, Challenges and External Influences

*Vasiliki Papatheologo*

Interregionalism is a pragmatic strategy for action by the EU, and a tool to extend norms and European values to the developing world while promoting global governance. To this end, the EU has developed several interregional and trans-regional frameworks around in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Focusing specifically on interregionalism as an EU tool to promote regional governance in the East Asia region, this study examines relations between the EU and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) as a practical instance of pure interregionalism. This investigation negotiates the internal functions of interregionalism in EU–ASEAN bilateral relations along with its achievements and the challenges of bilateral interregional relationships. The work also deals with some external influences on EU–ASEAN interregionalism and highlights the great and regional powers (specifically the US and China) and their attitudes to the interregionalism being promoted by the EU to ASEAN and more generally in the East Asia region.

*Keywords* Interregionalism, European Union, ASEAN, China, US, European Values



### Introduction

Historically, interregionalism was an innovation of the EU's external relations framework as well as a product of the EU's status as the

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pre-eminent actor of its type. Since interregionalism's initial unfolding – as an external relations framework – it has developed into a distinct layer of the architecture of global governance and part of the international system.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, as a new wave of regionalism emerged over the last two decades, regional organisations have made efforts to establish themselves as real and significant international actors. In this context, interregional relations between regional entities have intensified, transforming the landscape of interregionalism from an EU-centred policy into one in which multiple actors play a part.

Nevertheless, the EU's version of interregionalism continues to be characterised by intense institutionalisation and the EU's own extensive integration. Specifically, the EU's international relations exist, to a large extent, in the interregionalism framework, reflecting a consistent search for structures within which to couch the EU's relationships with its external partners. Indeed, the importance of group-to-group relations is recognised in the Commission's claims that regional integration provides a chance to rationalise external relations and international cooperation.

Internationally, the EU becomes a normative power by exporting norms and values around the globe via interregionalism, which is the main tool of EU foreign policy. The interregionalism concept plays three key functions in EU external relations: first it aims to manage global interdependence; the primary axis of EU foreign policy. Second, it is a tool for achieving further regional governance since it facilitates the regionalisation process and establishes the “actorness” of regional entities. Finally, it attempts to manage political and economic dialogue with other partners and regional actors. In this sense, interregionalism is both a practical EU strategy and an alternative world order for managing global interdependence.

As an EU external policy tool, interregionalism enables the EU to expand its role in the East Asia region. It is true that the EU lacks an active role in East Asia and its main motives are economic at both multilateral and bilateral levels based on the upping of its economic and normative power. Interregionalism may, however, also provide a chance to the EU to actively participate in East Asia and so become a mediator of the balance of power there.

Admittedly, the EU's approach to East Asia remains fragmented when compared to its relations with other regions such as Africa and

Latin America. This is largely attributed to the culturally heterogeneity and diversity of the region and the geographic distant it is from Europe. From a geopolitical point of view, the EU's role as a global power in Asia remains limited, and in this context, Asians see the EU more as a normative civilian power and example of regional integration potentially applicable to Asia than as a great power.

In focusing on the EU's position on Asia and exploring the place of interregionalism in its Asia policies, it is important to note that the EU's strategy in Asia is broad and divided into four main approaches. The first of these is bilateral and includes the EU's relations with its main Asian partners such as China, Korea and Japan. The EU's bilateral relations with these Asian countries mainly involve trade and investments. The second approach is multilateral and concerns the EU's participation in multilateral forums in the East Asia region such as the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) where the EU acts more as a normative power than a strategic one. In a multilateral forum such as the ARF, the EU's role remains limited since the US and China are the major actors in the East Asia region. Nevertheless, the EU's participation in ARF is a sign that the promotion of multilateralism is one of the main axes of the EU's external policies in East Asia. The EU's third way to East Asia relates to transregionalism within the framework of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM). The EU has a coherent role in the ASEM as a norm-making power. As an example of transregionalism or complex interregionalism however, ASEM has limited utility given the low level of actorness of its Asian partners, particularly since, in the ASEM context, East Asia is not represented as a united region but rather through separate, disparate Asian member states. The fourth EU approach deals with pure interregionalism, focusing on the EU-ASEAN relationship, which is a practical instance of this strategy. Through the EU-ASEAN region-to-region interaction, the EU is able to construct an external identity and present itself as an ideal type of regional institution and a normative power in external affairs.

The main goal of this study is to demonstrate how interregionalism works in the EU-ASEAN relationship and, in particular, to explore interregionalism's theoretical functions in this context. The influence of external factors is assumed here by reference to the role of great powers such as the US and China in the regionalisation process in East Asia as well as their place in EU-ASEAN interregionalism. A review of

the existing literature provides the theoretical background for interregionalism along with the reasons for its existence from a global governance standpoint. This existing literature, however, approaches the EU-ASEAN relationship in terms of bilateralism and does not engage with its interregional dimensions or the role of interregionalism as a theoretical framework. Against this backdrop, this work considers internal factors in EU-ASEAN interregionalism which can be traced to International Relations theories and to the bilateral features of the EU-ASEAN relationship.

### Functions of Interregionalism in EU-ASEAN Relations based on International Relations Theories

The answer to this study's inquiry into how interregionalism works in the EU-ASEAN bilateral relationship can be found in International Relations approaches and interregionalism's theoretical framework. In particular, while ASEAN and EU models of regionalism may seem similar, this resemblance is only superficial; they are very different and contradictory formulations. In the EU's case, integration was a legally established, deep-seated process based on a strong institutional strategy involving the sharing of sovereignty and its common exercise. In contrast, ASEAN integration has been of a regional process that makes space for the consolidating of national sovereignty and for nation and state-building. Its goal is consolidation and not the sharing of sovereignty.

In order to unpack the EU-ASEAN relationship as a case of 21<sup>st</sup>-century interregionalism, it is important to consider a theoretical framework for interregionalism. This can also help in understanding how the diversity and complexities of these two regions have been handled both within the EU and in the context of their interregional relationship. Distinguishing materialist, ideological and institutional theories is useful in order to grasp the ways that the three become entangled in this relationship in practice. The theoretical framework must also show how diverse EU-ASEAN relations coexist and interact in the multi-level character of EU-ASEAN relations.

The EU and ASEAN share a commitment to regional integration as a means of fostering regional stability, building prosperity and addressing global challenges. In addition, the EU fully supports the renewed efforts of the ASEAN to build closer relationships among its members.

The first function of interregionalism relates to *identity building*. The concept of collective identity formation stems from constructivist notions of actor identity. This is based on the argument that the fundamental structures of international relations are social in nature and that these structures, rather than simply facilitating and constraining action, help to sculpt actor interests and identities.<sup>2</sup> As an increasingly institutionalised structure of region-to-region relations, interregionalism offers a platform for contact between regional actors as well as a venue for socialisation and, thus, a framing context for the construction of collective regional identities and awareness. In other words, interregionalism is an example of the claim that as the “dynamic density” of interactions increases, so too will the potential for endogenous transformations of identity.<sup>3</sup> Where no firm identity has previously been established, a collective identity is more likely to be formed through interaction with an external “Other” if the external dialogue partner is a significant, more coherent entity. When it comes to identity building in the EU-ASEAN interregional relationship the EU, as a normative power, promotes interregionalism in order to spread norms and values which facilitate regional integration and actorness.

The second function of interregionalism in the EU-ASEAN relationship is *institution building*. Recognition of the importance of institution-building within interregionalism comes from the liberal institutionalist emphasis on the role of institutions in mitigating against potential causes of conflict; institutions instead generate cooperative outcomes and have a legalising effect on international relations. This stems from the view that institutions matter in world politics. Interregionalism involves the creation of a cooperative dialogue structure, moving into a formal arrangement. The process of interregional institution-building therefore helps strengthen the institutionalisation of international politics.<sup>4</sup> Another institutionalism-based interpretation holds that EU-ASEAN interregionalism is a way of institutionalising dialogues between the two entities. On a broader view, this is part of the globalisation of world politics at a multilateral level.

Interregionalism’s third and final function is *providing balance*. More specifically, the notion that interregionalism performs a balancing role in international relations comes from realist conceptions of actor competition. From this view, anarchy and a self-help approach to security lead to the accumulation of power individually or as part of a temporary coalition. The result is the emergence of a relatively stable

balance of power. While on the traditional realist approach, such power is defined in terms of territory, population, resources and military capacity, in the globalised world of the new interregionalism, power is increasingly seen to be founded on economic strength. Interregional balancing therefore constitutes a system of checks and balances developed through the diversification of political and economic relations and designed to avoid marginalisation and consolidate a multilateral system of shared principles, rules and norms. When potential courses of action are limited through a multilateral framework and the threat of economic and political marginalisation, the ability of any pole to act unilaterally is constrained. Through the structure of interregionalism, regional actors have sought to limit their dependence on others, remedy structural and relational imbalances of power and guarantee the preservation or promotion of their political and economic interests.

The EU-ASEAN relationship includes all three described functions of interregionalism. Yet, while identity building and institutionalisation are based on internal factors and the motivations of the main participants in interregionalism, i.e. the EU as the exporter and the ASEAN as the recipient, the third function of balancing power includes both internal and external factors and motivations. As such, it gives a more rounded and realistic explanation of the function of interregionalism.

So, when it comes to the EU-ASEAN interregional relationship, the reasons why regional entities and external actors (global powers) each participate in and support interregionalism are largely ideological and based on the globalisation of world politics. At the same time, however, the realist explanation can provide an answer about how interregionalism actually works since when practising interregionalism, the main motivation is balancing power within institutional-interregional frameworks.

### Opportunities and Challenges in EU-ASEAN Bilateral Interregionalism

The EU-ASEAN bilateral interregional dialogue is largely defined by what is achievable when qualitatively different regional actors meet. It is clear that the EU's aspirations for dialogue draw from ideas of capacity building and globally active varieties of interregionalism. Even so, the ability to deliver on these goals has been determined largely by the

asymmetry between the EU and the ASEAN as actors. Of note here is the failure of interregionalism to rekindle the EU's hopes regarding its role in the broader architecture of global governance. The strategy has not delivered the cooperative multilateral partnership so often highlighted as central to the EU concept of interregionalism. This is despite that investments in the post-bipolar world have been crucial to the interregional relationship.

Three features of EU-ASEAN interregionalism may therefore be highlighted. The first concerns the place of economic balancing as an effective basis for cooperation. It is in the economic sphere that the EU's actorness is primarily to be felt, and there are unsurprisingly concerns over market access, trade and ASEAN relations. The performance of bilateral interregionalism at global level has failed to meet these expectations. The main problem has been the limited actorness of both the EU and the ASEAN. Second is its continuing emphasis on the functions of a globally active interregional relationship. With the rise of global governance institutions in the post-bipolar era, these functions have increasingly been seen as the measure of success of the EU-ASEAN Charter integration project. This may change, however.

A third and final feature stems from the asymmetrical actorness of the EU and the ASEAN. The interregional relationship has been characterised by the performance of actions linked to capacity building for interregionalism. Alongside the non-purposive construction and reinforcement of ASEAN collective identity, one consequence of engaging with a more coherent regional "Other," is an increasingly strategic process of region building. Both the EU and the ASEAN have used EU-ASEAN interregionalism as a mechanism for fostering Southeast Asian regionalism. Within the architecture of interregionalism, a range of programmes have been set up with the aim of increasing the capacity of ASEAN Secretariat as an interlocutor in the integration process. Further, ASEAN has elaborated clear goals for its own integration; this capacity-building process has become strategic.<sup>5</sup>

In this context, subsequent bilateral interregional agreements have formally recognised the EU-ASEAN relationship. In the era of the 1983 Cooperation Agreement with the European Commission, the Cartagena Agreement recognised the establishment of sub-committees, while the 1989 EC-Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Cooperation Agreement formally acknowledged engagements at ministerial level. Three core

elements make up the backbone of the EU's bilateral interregionalism with ASEAN. The first is the ministerial level meeting, which takes decisions in pursuit of interregional goals. The ASEAN EU Ministerial Meeting (AEMM), for example, is convened every 18 months with representatives of both the EU and the ASEAN. The second, the Joint Cooperation Committee (JCC), assists the institution at ministerial level; it comprises officials from each region and is called at least once a year. The third consists of the subcommittees and working groups established by either the ministerial level or the JCC. These subcommittees are issue-based and include a trade group along with others bearing on specific issues in EU-ASEAN relations.<sup>6</sup>

As a mechanism of interregionalism, the AEMM enhances the political dialogue. Human rights promotion is another feature of the EU's advancement of interregionalism to the ASEAN. More specifically, the EU supports the work of the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission for Human Rights (AICHR), the overarching rights promotion and protection body in the ASEAN. This support exists through regional dialogues, seminars and technical cooperation programmes. EU-ASEAN cooperation takes place in regional and international forums including the UN and the ASEM, where it is seen as a way of strengthening the multilateral system. In contrast, the EU's own motives for promoting regional cooperation are to maintain peace, activity and stability and continue bolstering ASEAN's central place in the evolving regional architecture. Furthermore, the EU is involved in the areas of maritime security, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, peacekeeping operations, military medicine and counter-terrorism. In parallel, it adds weight to the role of the ARF where the ASEAN is the primary force promoting peace and stability as well as dialogue and cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region.

In terms of implementing pure interregionalism, the EU uses the political dialogue arising from its security/political cooperation with ASEAN, to address a number of "non-traditional" security activities. These include, for example, promoting dialogue and cooperation on ways to tackle transnational crime and supporting the implementation of the ASEAN Convention on Counter-Terrorism. Further, the EU and the ASEAN cooperate closely in the areas of conflict prevention, peace-building, crisis management, disarmament and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. This joint work happens through workshops, seminars and exchanges of best practices and experiences.<sup>7</sup>



Economic cooperation is another crucial area of EU-ASEAN relations. The EU promotes dialogue and the provision of technical assistance to the ASEAN when it comes to economic and social policy. This is done with a view to contributing to sustainable development. Taken as a whole, the ASEAN is also the EU's third largest trading partner outside Europe (after the US and China).

Alongside trade negotiations with individual ASEAN members, the EU cooperates closely with the whole ASEAN region. This cooperation is maintained through:

1. EU-ASEAN dialogue, which includes discussions on trade and investment issues at ministerial and with senior economic aide levels.
2. Seminars conducted by the EU and the ASEAN Secretariat on topics such as regional economic integration, liberalising services, technical barriers to trade and trade facilitation.<sup>8</sup>

Cooperation concerning energy security is also part of the EU-ASEAN interregional relationship. The focus here is on promoting energy security and efficiency along with conservation measures and technologies. The EU supports the stimulation of regional programmes for ASEAN on developing alternative energy sources as well as nuclear energy and safety.

Socio-cultural cooperation is one of the main tools for promoting EU-ASEAN interregionalism. This entails cooperation on "low" political matters like education and health, and person-to-person contact. In the education sector, for example, the EU encourages the mobility of students and academics between ASEAN and EU higher institutions.

Promoting exchanges among cultural artists and scholars is another way of strengthening EU-ASEAN relations. In the health sector, this cooperation is enhanced by encouraging exchanges of knowledge and experiences among public health and medical experts. Gender equality is a further focus for cooperation through the exchange of experiences and practices. The EU offers programmes and policies on the wellbeing of women, children, the elderly and people with disabilities. Regarding disaster management, the EU has boosted its cooperation with the ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management by sharing experiences and support related to best preventative practices. It also encourages partnerships with relevant stakeholders, including local communities, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), civil society and private enterprises.

In science and technology, the EU promotes cooperation in research and technical innovation under the Seventh Framework Programme and the Horizon 2020 Programme. This includes support for the ASEAN's establishment of a network of science and technology centres of excellence to foster closer cooperation and the sharing of research facilities. Such closer cooperation facilitates exchanges and the greater mobility of scientists and researchers. Concerning global environmental challenges, the EU offers technical support and capacity building to assist with the ASEAN's implementation of implementing Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) and the ASEAN Climate Change Initiative (ACCI). Moreover, the EU encourages sub-regional cooperation to boost socio-economic development and sustainable water management.

In terms of institutional support for ASEAN, the EU first of all supports measures to build the capacities of the ASEAN Secretariat and other ASEAN institutions. Second, it promotes exchange programmes with the ASEAN and particularly between the EU Commission and the ASEAN Secretariat. Finally, the EU endorses the establishment of institutional links between the Committee of Permanent Representatives to ASEAN (CPR) and the Committee of Permanent Representatives in the EU (COREPER). Connections include through exchanges among officials, the sharing of best practices and visits.<sup>9</sup>

### Key Challenges for EU-ASEAN Interregional Relations

Multiple challenges have been evident in the EU-ASEAN relationship since the signing of the 1980 Cooperation Agreement. The first of these challenges is the absence of a clear cooperation agenda. Economic balancing factors have instead been the primary force behind the EU-ASEAN relationship, and they form the basis for cooperation that is supplemented by political and security-based reactions to external triggers. This default economic setting for EU interregionalism is the product of the EU's role as an economic actor in this context. In the EU-ASEAN relationship especially, economic goals have largely been defined in terms of the self-focused balancing function of interregionalism.

A second challenge lies in the contrast between the fulfilment of the functions of EU interregionalism associated with capacity building on

the one hand, and the failure to meet increasing expectations for dialogue linked to the high-end aspects of a globally active interregionalism on the other. These high-end functions are expressed in the strategy documents of the AEMM and the Commission.<sup>10</sup>

Regarding the challenges of EU-ASEAN bilateral interregionalism, it is also clear that each side has a different top priority in the relationship. For the EU, China is undoubtedly the biggest priority in Asia, and most political energy and economic resources have been concentrated there even in the context of an overall deficit of EU involvement in Asia. For the ASEAN, in contrast, the number-one priority relationship is with the US not only because it is the ASEAN's main trading partner but also since it is the key strategic player in Southeast Asia. The presence of the US provides an important guarantee of regional security, especially as a counterpoint to the growing power and influence of China. To a large extent, the ASEAN has assumed the EU to be a player whose instrumental balancing function in the region lies in moderating American and Chinese influences.

In addition, there is the issue of the EU's dual identity as a strong and coherent actor in matters of "low" politics such as trade and economics where the EU acts with a single voice, and a weak and divided actor in "high" political areas like defence and security where it has multiple and contradictory voices. The fact that the EU has played no role in the regional security framework – a structure traditionally dominated by tough security questions and the risks of conflict between states - has contributed over the years to reducing the EU's relevance in the South-east Asia region. Security awareness in that region is acute.

Moreover, ASEAN enlargement in the second half of the 1990s decreased the level of cohesion inside the ASEAN and created a two-speed process and a more insular orientation that is aggravated by the economic and social crises of the Asian financial meltdown. Significantly, it has also generated the Myanmar problem, which has been a stumbling block in EU-ASEAN relations. The regional process has lost momentum because of a lack of leadership after Indonesia left that role, exhausted by its own domestic turmoil.

Finally, to reiterate, despite their surface similarity, the ASEAN and the EU models of regionalism are different and conflicting. For the EU, integration was a legally established intensive process driven by a strong institutional strategy involving the sharing of sovereignty and

its common exercise. In contrast, the ASEAN clearly sought to create a regional process that allows space for the consolidating of national sovereignty and nation and state-building. Its focus has, thus, been consolidation rather than the sharing of sovereignty. Nevertheless, there is interest in developing para-diplomatic links between EU regions/subnational governments on one side, and subnational governments and regional players in ASEAN countries on the other.

Lacking a holistic direction and still largely dominated by economic factors, EU-ASEAN relations have not just registered a clear decline in recent years with trade and foreign direct investment (FDI) flows dropping and political relations becoming hostage to the Myanmar problem: the relationship now runs the risk of turning into a secondary one. Changes in Southeast Asia, and especially the progress in democratisation and human rights standards which brought the ASEAN closer to the EU, have so far had no major impact on - or even contributed to - the reinvigoration of the relationship. Excessive governmentalisation, the dual identity of the EU and its ambiguous status as an international player and the divergence between EU and ASEAN models of regional integration, are some of the structural obstacles that account for current difficulties. These challenges have been assumed in the literature and framed against the qualitative difference in the actorness of the two regions when defining the real nature of the EU-ASEAN relationship.

This point about the asymmetrical relations between the EU and the ASEAN leads us to interregionalism's final balancing function, which is itself influenced by external factors. In particular, great global powers such as the US and China have an impact on EU-ASEAN interregionalism, which serves as a tool for balancing power and stability in the East Asia region. In this context, interregionalism expands the EU's role as a mediator in the region. In terms of external factors, the US and China as global powers view this interregionalism positively as an opportunity for regional governance and stability.

### **External Actors in EU-ASEAN Bilateral Interregionalism: The Role of the Great Powers**

Turning to the external influences and, in particular, the role of the great powers in EU-ASEAN interregionalism, the key argument is that

EU-ASEAN interregional relations are in fact influenced by changes in the balance of power in the East Asia region. Even a realist explanation of EU-ASEAN interregionalism should take into account the ideological reasons why states (great powers) participate in and support interregionalism based on institutionalism and multilateralism. More specifically, we can make the case that the key great powers involved in the East Asia region (the US and China) can influence EU-ASEAN interregional relations and they are actually positive about interregionalism. This is because interregionalism is, on the one hand, an institutional tool which can provide a platform for multilateral cooperation and regional governance, and on the other, a way of ensuring the balance of power and stability in the East Asia region.

*Vasiliki  
Papatheologo*

As may be guessed from the range of areas of cooperation among the EU, the US and the ASEAN, the US approves of EU-ASEAN interregionalism. This is for a number of key reasons. First, the EU and the US remain allied and share many of the same fundamental governing and social values and aims in East Asia. Second, interregionalism is a tool for promoting multilateralism in the region, and third, in the face of regionalisation, interregionalism can be a tool for balancing power in the East Asia region. Through interregionalism, East Asia has the potential to be a region where more than one or two superpowers (the US, China, India, Russia, etc.) and regional entities (ASEAN, ASEAN+3, the EU etc.) are active. In sum, the US takes an affirmative view of the EU-ASEAN interregional relationship because the EU, its ally, shares its foreign policy values, and at the same time, the interregionalism concept can facilitate multilateralism and promote a power balance in the East Asia region, which is the main concern of US policy on East Asia.

To give a full picture of the impact of external factors on interregionalism, it is necessary to explore the role of China as a regional power in East Asia and, by extension, its involvement in and positive take on EU-ASEAN interregionalism. Lastly, we can consider China's overall attitude to the EU's role in East Asia as an exporter of interregionalism.

China takes a favourable view of EU-ASEAN interregionalism because interregionalism is a platform for balancing power in the East Asia region. In addition, through EU-derived interregionalism, China has the chance to learn how to promote regional governance and participate actively in forming a regional identity. By responding positively to interregionalism, China may eventually have the opportunity to

advance its own image as a “responsible power” both regionally and globally. The institutional framework of the EU-ASEAN interregional relationship, thus, has China’s approval since China itself intends to be a responsible power in the Asia-Pacific region by improving the institutional framework there. Turning to the EU-China relationship, China sees the EU as a trading partner as well as a civilian and normative power from which China can learn how to foster regionalism. The EU example can, thus, give lessons to China about how to implement and actively participate in the regionalisation process in East Asia. From a geopolitical point of view, the EU’s geo-strategic role in the East Asia region is limited since the main axis of EU foreign policy is promotion of interregionalism and multilateralism through a systematic institutional framework. The EU has no strategic interest in the region beyond increasing interdependent trade with its Asian partners and the flow of investments. In this context, China looks positively on the EU’s intentions in the region and sees the EU as a partner and not a competitor since China benefits from trade with the EU and, at the same time, the interregionalism which the EU is promoting gives China the chance to learn how to deal with regional organisations in the area.

More generally, external factors in the EU-ASEAN interregional relationship, including the roles of the great powers and the international system influence the functions of interregionalism. The impact of the great powers on EU-ASEAN relations is, however, positive: on the one hand, the US sees EU-ASEAN interregionalism as a chance to balance power in the East; on the other, China approaches EU-ASEAN interregionalism as first an opportunity to interact with regionalism in East Asia and prove itself ready to emerge peacefully as a responsible power and second a chance to learn from the EU example of building up regionalism. Experiences of the EU-ASEAN relationship indicate that the reasons why states participate and interact with interregionalism relate mainly to the functions of identity building and institutionalising international relations. Still, states which participate and interact with interregionalism do so with the motive of achieving balance in an interregional framework. This is the function that interregionalism serves in the international system and especially in EU-ASEAN relations given the fact that the East Asia region contains actors with a diversity of intentions when it comes to the balance of power and given the potential for China’s leadership. The latter is a factor which motivates both the US as a great power and other regional powers to look for

ways to achieve balance within multilateral, regional, transregional and interregional forums.

## Conclusion

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Having analysed the EU-ASEAN relationship as an example of pure interregionalism, we may infer that interregionalism can work successfully in a context of regional actors. The EU-ASEAN relationship interregionalism is, thus, effective as a result of the high level of regional actorness of the two parties. To this end, the EU promotes interregionalism to the ASEAN as an existing regional entity in East Asia. In its multilateral approach to Asia, the EU's role remains limited within an economic and political framework since the great powers such as the US and China enjoy more influential positions. Within the ASEM structure, the East Asia region lacks real actorness and thus, the results of interregionalism are not so effective. In the EU-ASEAN relationship, however, the EU takes an active role by promoting interregionalism as a "stabilising instrument" for the East Asia region and promoting regional actorness and governance. It is assumed that the EU-ASEAN interregional relationship is influenced by internal and external factors. The internal factors consist of the political, economic, social and interregional characteristics of the bilateral relationship, the functions of interregionalism based on International Relations theories and the EU's own motives in promoting regional actorness and governance using interregionalism as a tool in its external policies involving the ASEAN. The external factors which influence the EU-ASEAN interregional relationship are defined by the role of key great powers, which act in East Asia with a view to the balance of power and stability in the region. In particular, the great powers (specifically the US and China) are positive about the EU-ASEAN interregional relationship, which is mainly driven by ideological and institutional factors but whose results address stability, regional identity creation and governance in the East Asia region. By supporting interregionalism, the US strengthens its role in the region and preserves its allies. China, on the other hand, has the chance to promote itself as a responsible power in the region by participating in the creation of regional governance. This is a practical way in which it can increase its role in the region via multilateral and interregional methods.<sup>11</sup>

VASILIKI PAPTHEOLOGO is affiliated to the School of International Studies of Renmin University of China in Beijing and may be reached at: [info@cejiss.org](mailto:info@cejiss.org)

CEJISS  
3/2014

## Notes

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- 11 Please note that this work made use of various other sources in the formulation of its main strands of argumentation including: David Camroux (2007), 'The EU, China and ASEAN,' at: <[www.notre-europe.eu/uploads/tx\\_publication/EU-ASEAN-Camroux\\_01.pdf](http://www.notre-europe.eu/uploads/tx_publication/EU-ASEAN-Camroux_01.pdf)> (accessed 12 December 2014), pp.1-10; Yeo Lay Hwee (ed) (2004), *The Eurasian Space: Far More Than Two Continents*, Singapore: ISEAS Publications; Jürgen Rüländ (1999), 'The EU as an Inter-Regional Actor: The Asia-Europe Meeting,' article presented at the conference titled: *Asia and Europe on the Eve of the 21st Century*, held on 19-20 August 1999 in Bangkok at Chulalongkorn University, published in: Suthiphand Chirathivat/Franz Knipping/Poul Henrik Lassen and Chia Siow Yue (eds) (2001), *Asia-Europe on the Eve of the 21st Century*, Bangkok: Saksopha Press, pp. 43-56; Paul Welfens, Suthiphand Chirathivat and Franz Knipping (2010), *EU-ASEAN: Facing Economic Globalisation*, Springer Publishing; Melitsas Spyros (2011), 'Interregionalism: The Case of FEALAC,' *Institute of International Economic Relations*, Athens: Greece; Mathew Doidge (2011), *Inter-Regionalism and Regional Actors: The EU-ASEAN Example*, Ashgate Publishing: London and Jürgen Rüländ (2006), 'Interregionalism: An Unfinished Agenda,' in Heiner Hanggi, Ralf Roloff and Jürgen Rüländ, (eds) (2006), *Interregionalism and International Relations*, London: Routledge, pp. 295-313.